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THE RECONSTRUCTION OF LIBERIA

by

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with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association

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INTRODUCTION

FOLLOWING the revelations of the International Commission of Inquiry concerning forced labor, which were published in January 1931, the Liberian government requested administrative assistance from the League of Nations in regard to a program of reforms. After a year and a half of study and negotiation, the League Council presented a proposal to Liberia at its May session. If Liberia approves this project in principle, negotiations are to take place during August between the Liberian government and a Council Committee. Should these negotiations fail, it is possible, according to some observers, that Liberia will be the scene of revolt and disintegration, or intervention by the United States or a European power. Other observers state, however, that it is hardly conceivable that the Liberian government, having invited assistance from the League, would unconditionally reject a proposal which is the outcome of arduous labor by some of the leading statesmen of the world. Nevertheless, at the present writing the attitude of the Liberian government, the American State Department, and the Firestone interests toward the League proposal is not definitely known. If these efforts toward reconstruction end in failure, the result might be worse than if no investigation into Liberian affairs had ever taken place.

Liberia, founded in tropical West Africa in 1821 as a home for freed slaves, adopted in 1847 a constitution modeled on that of the

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United States. Liberians estimate that about 70,000 English-speaking "civilized" descendants of these Negroes, called Americo-Liberians, are found along the coast; the vast majority of the population, numbering 1,500,000, consists of "uncivilized" native peoples, such as the Mandingos, Krus and Golas. Since most of the population is primitive and illiterate, the government has been in the hands of the Americo-Liberians. A gradual process of amalgamation between the "native" and "civilized" elements, however, is taking place.[1]

INTERNATIONAL RECEIVERSHIP, 1912

From the outset the governing class in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, has experienced difficulties in administering the tribes in the hinterland and in warding off the encroachments of France and England. Largely in order to prevent Liberia from becoming a British protectorate, the American government in 1912 brought about a loan agreement between Liberia and a group of foreign bankers, providing for a 5-per-cent forty-year loan of $1,700,000. Virtually all the proceeds of this loan were used to pay previous British loans and internal claims. As a guarantee that Liberia would meet interest charges and that the country would not fall into the hands of any single power, the loan agreement provided that the Liberian customs should be collected by a General Receiver, "designated" by the United States, and by three receivers named by the British, German and French governments. The agreement also authorized the United States to nominate military officers to drill the Liberia Frontier Force, a local constabulary.

A revolt of the Kru tribe in 1915 might have led to intervention by France and Great Britain but for the arrival of the United States warship *Chester*, bringing 500 Krag carbines and 2,500 rounds of ammunition purchased by Liberia from the American War Department. With this aid, the Liberian government ended the revolt by executing 72 Kru Chiefs.[2] Charging that the government had failed to carry out the proposed reforms, the American Receiver-General resigned. On April 4, 1917 the State Department wrote that "unless the Liberian Government proceed without delay to act upon the advice and suggestions herewith expressed, this Government will be forced, regretfully, to withdraw the friendly support that historic and other considerations have hitherto prompted it to extend."[2a] Subsequently the American Minister, Mr. James L. Curtis, reported that the Liberian legislature had accepted most of the recommendations.

Owing in part to conditions created by the World War, the financial situation of Liberia steadily deteriorated. The government soon became heavily indebted to the local branch of the Bank of British West Africa. In order to protect its interests this institution proposed an agreement with the government which would give it a share in the internal administration of the country. To escape from the possible consequences of such an agreement, President Howard appealed to the United States for a loan in January 1918 offering to accept the services of Americans in the administration. On June 1, Secretary Lansing wrote Secretary McAdoo requesting financial aid for Liberia on the ground that "the Government of the United States should alone assume responsibility for the conduct of the affairs of the Republic."[3] On July 11, the State Department reinforced its appeal by stating that unless the United States advanced this aid there was "danger of Great Britain obtaining a predominant control of the country" through the British bank. As a result of these appeals, the United States Treasury established a credit of $5,000,000 in favor of Liberia in September 1918 under the authority of a Liberty Loan Act. This credit was made contingent on a program of reforms. In October 1921 the two governments signed an agreement providing that in return for this loan an American commission of 22 members should administer the financial, native and military affairs of the republic. Although the Liberian government accepted this agreement, it failed of approval in the United States Senate.

THE FIRESTONE AGREEMENTS OF 1926

Another effort at reconstruction came with the conclusion of the two Firestone agreements of 1926.[3a] In the concession agreement approved on November 18, 1926, the Liberian government leased to the Firestone Plantations Company one million acres of rubber land for 99 years at an annual rental of 6 cents for each acre actually under development. Six years after the concession agreement had entered into effect the Firestone Company was to pay a one-per-cent rubber export tax. By the loan agreement of Sep-

1. Cf. R. L. Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa* (New York, Macmillan, 1928), Vol. II, p. 749. This figure of 70,000 includes those who have intermarried with native stock.

2. Cf. League of Nations, report of W. H. Travell on the 1931 revolution, C.485.1932.VII.

2a. United States, *Foreign Relations, 1917*, p. 877, 884; cf. also, *ibid., 1918*, p. 505, *et seq.*

3. United States, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, p. 511, 522, 526.

3a. There were two other agreements, the first of which transferred to the Firestone interests the Mount Barclay rubber plantation, while the second obligated Firestone to construct a harbor, subject to reimbursement by the Liberian government. The harbor, however, has not been constructed.

tember 1, 1926,[4] the Finance Corporation, a Firestone subsidiary, undertook to make Liberia a forty-year loan of $5,000,000 at 7 per cent. The loan agreement obliged Liberia to use half of this loan largely to refund the 1912 5-per-cent loan — then amounting to $1,185,000—which would expire in 1952, together with many internal claims; and the Finance Corporation agreed to purchase bonds immediately to the extent of $2,500,000 at a price of 90. The second half of the loan was to be issued only when the annual customs and head-monies receipts reached $800,000 for two consecutive years.

The 1926 loan agreement displaced the international receivership established in 1912 in favor of exclusive American control. The Liberian government agreed that the organization of the customs and internal revenue administration should be supervised by an American financial adviser, a supervisor of customs, a supervisor of internal revenue, an auditor, and an assistant auditor; these officials, together with the two American officers of the Frontier Force, were to serve at a combined maximum salary of $52,500. For twenty years the Liberian government was to make no refunding loan except with the consent of the financial adviser, and thereafter the Finance Corporation was to have an option over any new loan; the National City Bank of New York was to act as fiscal agent.

Although the Firestone agreements were praised, not only by President King but by a number of Americans, as providing a means for the rehabilitation of Liberia,[5] they were criticized at the time on the ground that the rubber concession did not adequately safeguard native land and labor, and that the loan agreement increased Liberia's loan charges for unproductive purposes. It was pointed out that the development of the Firestone project, which called for from 300,000 to 350,000 laborers, would inevitably lead to forced labor, especially in view of the traditional methods of labor recruiting employed by the Liberian government. The power of veto over new loans vested in the Finance Corporation was also regarded as unusual. Despite these criticisms, President King brought pressure on the Liberian legislature to accept the agreements, partly in the hope that he would thereby secure the support of the State Department in a boundary dispute with France.[6]

In reply to criticisms of the agreements, the Firestone interests declared that a large concession was necessary to justify the risk which their investments involved. Every effort, they asserted, would be made to protect native interests, and the concession would not be developed beyond the labor capacity of the country—in 1931 less than 10,000 laborers were employed. A new loan, in their opinion, was necessary to extinguish European rights in Liberia and to prevent the Monrovia government from granting competing concessions to foreign concerns which would impair the Firestone interests. The whole development, it was added, was designed to free the United States from dependence on the British rubber "monopoly";[7] moreover, the new interest rate of 7 per cent was not excessive in view of the terms of other foreign loans.

The control established over Liberia by the 1926 agreement was also criticized on two grounds. First it was declared that the agreement did not vest the loan officials with adequate powers. Although the Financial Adviser was authorized to devise methods for the collection and administration of public revenue, it was not clear what authority he had to apply the system thus established. If he did not approve the current budget, it was provided that the budget of the previous year should continue in force. This provision, however, failed to check unwise expenditure, owing to the rapid decline in government revenue caused by the depression. Although the agreement authorized two officers to draw up a plan for the reorganization of a Frontier Force, it did not bestow on them any authority to carry out the plan.

Secondly, it was declared that the system of control was lacking in responsibility. The American government assumed the obligation of "designating" a Financial Adviser to Liberia, and, indirectly, other officials, but did not assume any responsibility for supervising their acts. These persons became officials of the Liberian government; they were expected, however, to control the acts of that government. The alleged irresponsible character of the system was indicated by the fact that between September 1926 and January 1931 neither the State Department, the National City Bank of New York, nor the American Finance Corporation was willing to publish the text of the loan contract.

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4. Mr. Firestone made the rubber concession dependent upon the acceptance of the new loan. Although some Liberians understood that the loan was to come from a non-Firestone source, the Finance Corporation organized to make the loan proved to be a Firestone subsidiary. According to the Liberian Secretary of State Grimes, this "was a flagrant violation of the undertaking assumed when the contract was signed." It is contended, however, that the Liberian government knew of this relationship from the beginning. League of Nations, *Minutes of the Ninth Meeting*, Committee of the Council, C./Liberia/P.V. (1)., p. 11.

5. Cf. Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, *New York Times*, August 29, 1928; President King's statement published in a State Department Press Release of August 31, 1928; Dr. Richard P. Strong, *The African Republic and the Belgian Congo* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1930), Vol. I, p. 134; and James C. Lawrence, *The World's Struggle with Rubber* (New York, Harpers, 1931), p. 59.

6. Cf. Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, cited.

7. Statement of Harvey Firestone, Sr., *New York Times*, September 2, 1928.

With the approval of the 1926 agreements by Liberia, the Firestone Plantations Company began planting operations; in addition, it undertook an anthropological and forest survey, and rendered assistance to certain scholars in the preparation of a Kpessee grammar. Largely as a result of Firestone operations, the imports of Liberia jumped from $2,898,081 in 1927 to $4,484,547 in 1928. In the latter year the excess of imports over exports amounted to $3,018,778. In 1929, however, the Firestone Company drastically curtailed its activities, apparently because of the fall in price of rubber. According to President King, this curtailment had had "disastrous consequences" on the commercial life of the country.[8]

LIBERIA'S FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

The 1926 loan apparently was not used for productive purposes.[9] The salary of the American Financial Adviser was raised from $5,000 to $12,500, the staff of all government departments was increased, and the salaries of high officials were raised. By 1931 the $2,027,700 so far expended—with the exception of $11,730 for public health and $156,439 for public works—had been used to refund the 1912 loan and to pay off internal claims. According to a committee of League experts, "the distressing thing" was that the $156,000 expended on public works had "been squandered as a result of the deplorable advice given to the Liberian Republic by the Financial Adviser [designated by the United States] at that time in office. It is generally recognized that what Liberia needs is roads; and it is painful to note" that the money available was employed for an electric power plant, a wireless station, presidential pavilions and other structures which in the eyes of the experts were of little value. "The situation today is that the sums derived from the loan have been spent without material advantage, while the annual charge represented by the salaries of the American advisers, the interest and redemption of the loan, etc., remains."[10]

Even before the economic depression struck Liberia, the government had resumed its old policy of accumulating a floating debt and annually expending more than it received. The deficit increased from $61,648 in 1927-1928 to $220,000 in 1930-1931. "The Administration was obviously headed for a collapse," said the League experts, "which would have occurred earlier" except for the Firestone investment which created a temporary boom.

In 1929-1930 the Liberian government and the Finance Corporation engaged in a series of controversies in which the Corporation charged that the government had violated the loan contract on six counts,[11] as when it ignored the provision authorizing the Financial Adviser to apply assigned revenues to the loan services. In the course of these controversies, the Corporation withheld sums still due from the 1926 loan until the Liberian government had changed its treasury policy; and the Financial Adviser failed to approve the 1931 budget. The Liberian government, however, contended that the dispute with the Corporation involved differences over the meaning of the 1926 agreement which should be settled by arbitration.

Dissatisfied with the financial policy of the government, the British Bank of West Africa, the only bank in Monrovia which had served as a depositary for the government, withdrew from Liberia in December 1930.[12] After vainly attempting to induce other banks to enter the country, the Firestone interests set up a bank called the United States Trading Company which arranged to act as the government depositary, receiving a commission of 1-1/2 per cent on sums deposited with it.[13]

The depression aggravated Liberia's difficulties. In 1930 imports dropped to $1,228,102, but there was still an unfavorable balance of trade of $389,364. Government revenue declined from $1,276,438 in 1928 to $551,306 in 1931. Meanwhile, the annual burden of $269,284, representing interest charges and salaries of American loan officials under the 1926 agreement, remained fixed. The Liberian government estimated that while these charges represented only 20 per cent of the government revenue in 1928, they absorbed 54.9 per cent in 1931.[14] Liberia was consequently forced into default during the second half of 1931, and is now greatly in arrears on salary payments to Liberians but not to American officials. According to a League committee, "*Liberia's financial situation is tragic* [*sic*]. . . . Economically and financially, Liberia is in imminent danger."[15]

8. *The Annual Message of His Excellency Charles Dunbar Burgess King, October 30, 1929* (Monrovia, Government Printing Office, 1929), p. 32.

9. League of Nations, *Report of the experts designated by the Committee of the Council of the League of Nations appointed to study the problem raised by the Liberian government's request for assistance* (hereafter cited as *Report of the Experts*), C./Liberia/4 (1)., p. 29.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Provisional Report of the Financial Adviser from October 1, 1929 to September 30, 1930.*

12. *New York Times*, January 11, 1931.

13. *Report of the Experts*, cited, p. 28.

14. League of Nations, *Memorandum of the Government of Liberia on the Report of the Experts*, C./Liberia/13., p. 19.

15. *Report of the Experts*, cited, p. 11.

YELLOW FEVER

The attention of the outside world has recently been directed to Liberia because of the appearance of yellow fever and the existence of forced labor and slavery. Yellow fever first made its appearance in Liberia in 1929 and resulted in the death, among others, of the American Minister, Mr. Francis, and Mr. James L. Sibley, educational adviser representing a number of American educational, missionary and philanthropic societies.[16] Yellow fever had previously appeared in other parts of West Africa, but had been placed under control by government health services and quarantines. In Liberia, however, the government possessed "no health service of any kind." According to a League investigation,

> ". . . the absence of any attempt by the Liberian Government not only to take effective steps to control yellow fever or plague, but even to arrange for the notification of yellow fever, as well as the complete lack of medical supervision of ships touching the Liberian coast, constitutes a grave international danger, which is particularly regrettable at a time when energetic measures are being taken against yellow fever in all the other countries of the West Coast of Africa."[17]

The country was also faced with the danger of introduction of the plague, which would entail "complete catastrophe for the population," as well as by the spread of yellow fever and tuberculosis into the interior. Largely as a result of the work of Dr. Howells, loaned by the British government, and of Dr. Fuszek, appointed director of sanitation by President Barclay, the health situation improved. Dr. Fuszek's work, however, was hampered by a shortage of funds.[18] No authentic cases of yellow fever have been reported in Liberia since 1929.

THE FORCED LABOR INVESTIGATION

For a number of years reports had been published alleging conditions of slavery and forced labor in Liberia; the charge, however, was denied not only by Liberia but also by the American State Department.[19] Finally, on June 8, 1929, the State Department sent a note to Liberia, calling attention to charges concerning the export of labor from Liberia to the Spanish island of Fernando Po "which seemed hardly distinguishable from organized slave trade." Although Liberia made a "solemn and categorical denial" of such charges,[20] it agreed to establish an international commission of investigation, one member being appointed by the United States, one by the League Council, and one by the Liberian government. This invitation was accepted by the League Council and the United States. The commission—consisting of the League representative, Dr. Cuthbert Christy, who served as chairman, Dr. Charles S. Johnson, Negro professor at Fiske University, representing the United States, and former President Barclay of Liberia—was constituted in Monrovia on April 7, 1930. Following an exhaustive investigation, the commission on September 8 completed its report, which was published simultaneously by the League and the State Department in January 1931.[21]

The commission reported the existence of the practice of "pawning," which was contrary to the terms of the 1926 slavery convention to which Liberia was a party. By this practice a parent or guardian, in return for a loan of money, would "pawn" his child for an indefinite period. In some cases "pawns" were held in servitude for as long as 40 years.

Secondly, the commission reported that a condition of forced labor existed in connection with recruiting for Fernando Po. The Spanish cocoa planters of this island, unable to find an adequate local supply, had for many years recruited labor in Liberia. In 1928 they entered into an agreement with a number of Liberians, some of whom were officials and relatives of President King, agreeing to pay $45 per boy for each group of 3,000 boys exported, plus a bonus of $5,000 for every additional group of 1,500 boys.[22] The commission declared that, having this financial incentive, Liberian officials, including Vice President Yancy, sent soldiers of the Frontier Force to "catch" boys. When the chiefs failed to supply the number of men demanded, they were fined excessive sums,

16. Strong, *The African Republic of Liberia and the Belgian Congo*, cited, Vol. I, p. 233. In December 1931 American educational and philanthropic societies announced the establishment in Liberia of the Booker Washington Agricultural and Industrial Institute, with an endowment fund of $100,000. (*New York Times*, December 20, 1931.)

17. *Report of the Experts*, cited, p. 8.

18. League of Nations, *Memorandum of the Government of Liberia on the Report of the Experts*, cited; also "Report of the Council Committee on Liberia," *Official Journal*, March 1932, p. 524.

19. Acting Secretary Castle, *New York Herald Tribune*, August 31, 1928.

20. Note of June 11, 1929. In its note of November 17, 1930, the United States declared that this inquiry was agreed to "with extreme reluctance" by the Liberian government.

21. United States, *Report of the International Commission of Inquiry into the Existence of Slavery and Forced Labor in the Republic of Liberia* (hereafter cited as *Report of International Commission of Inquiry*), Publications of the Department of State No. 147; also League of Nations, *Report of International Commission of Enquiry in Liberia*, C.658.M.272.1930.VI. During the investigation there was circulated what purported to be State Department instructions to Dr. Johnson, declaring, among other things, that the British and French governments wished to have Liberia placed under a League mandate. The American government pronounced the documents forgeries, and pointed out that they were couched in language entirely foreign to that used by the United States. Cf. the statement of June 28, 1930 issued by the Liberian State Department, also *The Spark*, July, 1930.

22. United States, *Report of International Commission of Inquiry*, cited, p. 58, 171.

and in some cases actually flogged before their own people by native soldiers or officials.

Thirdly, the commission found that the Liberian government had compelled natives to labor on a program of road construction which it had inadvisedly adopted without the aid of adequate surveyors or engineers. Native chiefs had been required to provide labor for this construction, and in addition had been obliged to furnish the laborers with food and tools. The men were invariably forced to work without pay, and both men and women laborers had frequently been subjected to cruel treatment. Many natives exhibited to the commission the bruises and scars they had received from government overseers; in addition to being flogged, some natives had been tortured by being strung up to the rafters of a hut and literally smoked over a fire. Others had been subjected to "basket punishment," by which an immense basket, filled with earth and heavy stones, was lifted by four soldiers and placed upon the head of the prisoner, who was then required to walk. Usually the basket was so heavy that it either immediately broke the native's neck, or caused such injury that he later died.

FIRESTONE'S LABOR POLICY

Finally, the commission investigated the question of whether the labor employed by the Firestone rubber plantation, the only large foreign enterprise in the country, was recruited by force. The commission found that the Firestone project

> ". . . represents a vast and somewhat bold experiment in rubber growing. . . The precipitous character of the company's pioneering operations in Liberia, the unfamiliarity of its employees with African conditions, the unsuitableness of its equipment and outfit, and the inexperience in the control of primitive labor all created difficulties which it took many months to get in front of. . ."

The commission found that until the end of 1927 the Firestone company secured about 10 per cent of its laborers from government sources,[23] but that at present "there is no evidence that the Firestone Plantations Company consciously employs any but voluntary labor." It pointed out, moreover, that only 55,000 acres of the concession had been developed and that present operations required only about 10,000 men. Workers were free to leave the plantation at will.[24]

In making recommendations for reform, the commission declared that the whole policy of the government toward the hinterland natives should be revised.

> "Intimidation has apparently been and is the keyword of the Government's policy. Not only have the native village classes been intimidated and terrorized by a display of force, cruelty, and suppression, but the chiefs themselves, men whom the people not so many years ago looked up to, were glad to serve and relied upon for protection, harsh though it sometimes was; men who never moved without a retinue and barbaric display of pomp have been so systematically humiliated, degraded and robbed of their power that now they are mere go-betweens, paid by the Government to coerce and rob the people."[25]

Apparently believing that the elimination of forced labor depended on the fundamental social reorganization of the country, the commission recommended that the policy of humiliating the chiefs should cease, and that their tribal authority should be restored. It asked that European or American native commissioners be appointed; pawning abolished; the road program curtailed; the shipment of laborers to Fernando Po stopped; the Frontier Force reorganized; and American immigration encouraged.

No longer able to deny the existence of forced labor, President King on September 30, 1930 informed the United States that he had accepted the recommendations of the Christy report.[26] On October 1 he issued decrees prohibiting the further export of labor and making "pawns" illegal, and on October 30 submitted the report to the legislature for its action.

After reading the report, Secretary Stimson sent a note which reached Liberia on November 5, 1930, declaring that the United States was "profoundly shocked" at the Christy revelations. The prestige of Liberia depended upon the "sincerity and effectiveness with which it puts promptly into execution the reform measures to which it stands solemnly committed."[27]

RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT KING

The Liberian legislature, while not necessarily opposed to reforms, was indignant with President King. Many Liberians believed that he was a catspaw of the State

23. The commission produced evidence to show that such labor was compulsorily recruited. United States, *Report of International Commission of Inquiry*, cited, p. 125, *et seq.* In 1926, however, the Firestone company proposed a "supplementary interpretation" of the labor provisions of the 1926 concession to the effect that it should be free to bargain with labor, without recourse to the government. The latter apparently had wished to participate in the recruiting to prevent natives from believing that the Firestone company was not under government control.

24. Cf., however, the testimony of Secretary of State Grimes in 1932. League of Nations, *Minutes of the 8th Meeting*, January 27, 1932, Council Committee on Liberia; cf. also remarks of M. Brunot, *Minutes of the 11th Meeting*, and of M. Sottile, *Minutes of the 12th Meeting*, February 1, 1932. For the charges of a number of native chiefs that the government had allowed the Firestone company to occupy land owned by natives, cf. *The Voice of the People* (Monrovia), October 1931.

25. United States, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, cited, p. 140.

26. The report was submitted to the Liberian government on September 8, 1930, to the State Department on October 21, and to the League Council on December 15.

27. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, February 1931, p. 467. The United States transmitted the notes of November 5 and November 17, 1930 to the League Secretariat for the information of the parties to the anti-slavery convention of 1926, to which the United States was a party. The League Council communicated the Christy report to the Assembly as one of the documents annually submitted in accordance with the 1926 convention. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, February 1931, p. 219.

Department and the Firestone interests, and that except for his policies the country would have been left alone. The attitude of the legislature led Washington to send a second note on November 17, in which the State Department declared that despite promise of reforms the Liberian government

> ". . . has failed to submit definite plans for their execution . . . Ten weeks have now elapsed since the formal submission of the report to the Liberian Government. The American Government understands that not only has no action been taken against the officials whose guilt was established therein, but apparently all of these officials continue to hold public office . . . Unless there is instituted by the Liberian Government a comprehensive system of reforms, loyally and sincerely put into effect, it will result in the final alienation of the friendly feelings which the American Government and people have entertained for Liberia since its establishment nearly a century ago."

On December 2 a special committee of the Liberian legislature presented a report recommending the prosecution of a number of officials implicated by the Christy report, the impeachment of Vice President Yancy, and the resignation of President King in favor of Secretary of State Edwin Barclay. Nevertheless, the committee wished "to have it understood that it had not yet taken into consideration the Christy recommendations." Mr. King resigned. The American note of November 17 was received during the interim between his resignation and Barclay's induction on December 3 as Acting President.[28] In his annual message, Barclay declared that in view of the legislature's attitude, it was "impossible to confirm President King's commitments. . .No coerced admission of failure and incompetency" should lead to the voluntary surrender of Liberia's independence.[29] In the presidential elections of May 1931, Mr. Barclay, as the candidate of the Whig party, won a victory over Mr. Thomas J. Faulkner, the candidate of the People's party, who had come to the United States in 1929 to demand an investigation in Liberia. The opposition charged that Mr. Barclay unfairly controlled the election—a charge which was denied. Neither the American nor the British government, however, has recognized Barclay as President.[30]

INTRODUCTION OF REFORMS

Following Barclay's accession, the Liberian legislature enacted laws prohibiting the exportation of contract labor, providing for the reorganization of the hinterland and opening it to trade, prohibiting pawning, and creating a public health service. Moreover, proceedings were taken against the Secretary of the Interior and a number of commissioners. The government also asked the United States to nominate experts to supervise the health service and to work in the interior administration. The United States did not reply to this request, apparently preferring to await the action of the League.[31]

On December 15, 1930 the Barclay government presented the Christy report to the League, declaring that it would "take account," as far as possible, of the Christy recommendations,[32] that reforms had already been made, and that every effort to wipe out forced labor would be undertaken. It stated, however, that it was difficult to eradicate immemorial customs and that on certain African tribes compulsory labor seemed to have an educational effect. It asserted that the Christy commission had learned only isolated facts, chiefly referring to the period 1919 to 1928; that many witnesses had been inspired by political motives; and that Liberia should receive credit for being the first government freely to accept an international inquiry.[33] It was common knowledge, it added, that "in other countries than Liberia forced labor is in full force."

In his presidential message of December 22, 1931, President Barclay declared that the prompt measures taken to remedy the conditions described in the Christy report had been so effective that he was gratified to "report the complete eradication from our social life of the pawn system and of every other condition which by any strength of interpretation or imagination may be considered as analogous to slavery or involuntary servitude." In support of this view, he quoted a report of one of the American loan officials, Mr. Travell, who declared that the abolition of pawning had caused certain dissatisfaction among the hinterland tribes and that the abolition of compulsory porterage had made it extremely difficult for officials to obtain carriers.[34]

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28. Dr. Christy states that King's resignation was "brought about by his political opponents in Monrovia and not at the instigation of the United States Government." ("Liberia in 1930," *Royal Geographical Society*, June 1930. Cf. also League of Nations, *Memorandum of the Government of Liberia on the Report of the Experts*, cited, p. 3.)

29. *The Annual Message of President Edwin Barclay, December 22, 1931* (Monrovia, Government Printing Office, 1931).

30. On July 8, 1930 the People's party of Montserrado County requested the assistance of the United States and the League of Nations in removing the King administration and establishing a provisional government until the next presidential election, which they requested should be supervised by a commission consisting of three members—one named by each party and one by the League and the United States. Another mass meeting, however, denounced this invitation of foreign intervention. (Cf. *The National Echo*, Monrovia, July 1930.) In an agreement between the Whig and People's parties, but the proposal apparently was not considered by President Barclay. the fall of 1931, it was reported that M. Sottile had proposed (Cf. *The Voice of the People*, Monrovia, October 1931.)

31. It had sent Dr. Smith to Liberia, however, to attack the problem of yellow fever.

32. Submitted to the Council January 22, 1931, *Official Journal*, February 1931, p. 463; cf. also the Liberia note of January 9, 1931, *ibid.*, p. 466.

33. Cf. M. A. Sottile's remarks at the Council. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

34. *The Annual Message of President Barclay, 1931*, cited, p. 16.

ALLEGED REPRISALS

Charges that the Liberian government had punished native witnesses who gave testimony against it were made not only by the Christy commission, but by the American State Department and M. Brunot, chairman of the second League committee.[35] Secretary of State Grimes emphatically denied the charges of reprisals. Viscount Cecil, chairman of the Council's Liberia committee, pointed out that if these charges were true, the League of Nations would be justified in deeply resenting reprisals, "for the honour of the League was at stake."[36]

The Kru Revolt

On January 30, representatives of the American, British and French governments informed the League's Liberia committee that the Monrovia government had taken repressive measures against the Krus,[37] and on March 7 these same governments are reported to have protested against the "massacre" of between 400 and 600 unarmed men, women and children on the Kru coast on December 11, 1931 by way of reprisal because of testimony before the Christy commission.[38]

On March 14 these three governments sent a special agent, Mr. Rydings, British Vice-Consul at Monrovia, to the Kru coast to investigate the situation, and a week later the Barclay government sent a commission of inquiry, consisting of Mr. Travell, an American loan official, and two Liberians. The three reports resulting from these inquiries—Mr. Travell published a minority report—were published at Geneva in May 1932.[39]

These reports indicate that the Barclay government employed force not by way of reprisals against natives who had testified before the Christy commission—that body did not visit this area—but in order to suppress a revolution.[40] This revolt was caused by long-standing discontent, inflamed by false hopes aroused by the Christy investigation. In the wake of this investigation unscrupulous Liberians had told the Krus that the white man was going to take over the country and that natives need pay no further taxes. In order to settle outstanding disputes and reestablish the authority of the government, President Barclay instructed Colonel Davis of the Frontier Force to proceed to the Kru coast in May 1931. The President issued strict instructions against initiating aggressive action and looting. According to Mr. Travell, "Colonel Davis was indeed patient, and for a period of almost ten weeks he wrote many letters to the defiant tribes, and restrained his soldiers. . . " Up to the beginning of hostilities, "the activities of Colonel Davis on the Kru coast was [*sic*] characterized by great caution, humanity and a desire to avoid conflict." Nevertheless, fighting finally broke out on November 10, 1931, following the refusal of Chief Nimley to surrender his arms. The reports agreed that instead of 600 "unarmed" people being killed, the number of casualties did not exceed 170, among whom some non-combatants were included. It was reported, however, that in the fighting the Frontier Force burned down about 40 native villages, as a result of which between 12,000 and 15,000 natives had fled to the bush where they continued to defy government authority. Although the Liberian commissioners contended that the burning of towns was a military necessity and that the campaign was conducted with restraint, Mr. Travell did not entirely agree with this statement, while Mr. Rydings declared that the military operations had been conducted in a "ruthless, callous and brutal manner." The Barclay government, for its part, declared that "against these various subversive movements, swelling in volume and increasing in violence as the days went by, the Government found itself obliged to take drastic action; for no Government, unless intent on abdicating, can sit with folded hands while its agents are outraged, its lawful dues withheld, its authority disregarded and its laws defied."[41] It expressed surprise that Great Britain and France, which had frequently been obliged to suppress revolts in their colonial territory, should protest against the efforts of the Liberian government to maintain peace and order.

While this investigation did not substantiate the sweeping charges allegedly made by the three governments on March 7, it revealed that the authority of the Liberian government over the Kru coast had been severely shaken. Consequently the League

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35. League of Nations, *International Commission of Enquiry*, p. 205; also American Memorandum of November 17-December 1, *Official Journal*, February 1931, p. 468; *Minutes of the 7th meeting*, Committee of the Council, C./Liberia/P.V. 7[1]; also the Liberian letter of January 1931, *Official Journal*, February 1931, p. 469.

36. League of Nations, *Minutes of the 7th Meeting;* cf. also the Council discussion of February 6, 1932, *Official Journal*. March 1932, p. 526.

37. League of Nations, *Minutes of the 11th Meeting*, C./Liberia./P.V.11 (1); cf. also remarks of M. Brunot, *Minutes of the 7th Meeting.*

38. The text of the protest was not published, but it is summarized in President Barclay's letter of March 21, 1932 to the investigating commission, League of Nations, C.485.1932.VII. Cf. also *Afro-American* (Baltimore), March 19, 23, 1932; *New York Times*, March 16, 1932; *Christian Science Monitor*, March 16, 1932; *United States Daily*, March 28, 1932.

39. For the Rydings report, cf. League of Nations, C.486.-1932.VII, cited; for the two reports of the Liberian commission, cf. C.482.1932.VII. and C.485.1932.VII.

40. Mr. Rydings reported, however, that any native who openly expressed a preference for white rule was held to be guilty of sedition and confined. It was also charged that Liberians who raised funds to send representatives to present the case of the opposition at Geneva were arrested on charges of sedition. Cf. *Afro-American*, November 28, 1931.

41. League of Nations, C./Liberia/19., p. 2.

Council, in agreement with the Liberian government, dispatched a representative to the Kru coast in May 1932 to persuade the Krus to return to their homes.[42] These incidents show that if an international investigation of this type does not lead to reprisals, it may stimulate a rebellious spirit among disaffected elements unless the authority making the investigation imposes provisional preventive measures.

CHANGE IN AMERICAN POLICY

Although in supporting the 1926 contracts the State Department seemed to desire to establish exclusive American influence over Liberia, this attitude was abandoned when it accepted the principle of an international inquiry in 1929. On January 20, 1931, moreover, the Department declared that

> "While it would not accord with the established policy of the United States to assume any exclusive responsibilities on the African continent, the American government, in view of the social and humanitarian principles involved and the traditional friendly interest of the American people in the welfare of Liberia, would be prepared to give sympathetic consideration to a proposal for affirmative international cooperation destined to assist the Liberian people in a solution of their present problems concerning both slavery and sanitation."[43]

On February 5, 1931 the League received a letter from Secretary Stimson, accepting an invitation to cooperate with the League in a reconstruction program.

THE LEAGUE AND RECONSTRUCTION

On January 21, 1931 the representatives of the American, British and German governments in Monrovia were reported to have asked "Mr." Barclay to accept international control.[44] While declining to accept this proposal on the ground that it would be tantamount to surrendering the sovereignty of the country, President Barclay stated that Liberia would apply to the League for advisers regarding finance, judicial organization, sanitation, and native administration.

Placed upon the agenda by the British government, the Christy report was discussed by the League Council on January 22, 1931. At that time, Mr. Sottile, the Italian who serves as Liberia's permanent delegate to the League, declared that the application of the reforms proposed by the Christy report was handicapped by the fact that Liberia "was in the most precarious financial situation she had ever known." Liberia was, "*financially speaking, a slave* [*sic*] . . . The energies of the Liberian people are paralyzed—not by the Government of Liberia, not by the Liberian people, not by the world economic situation, and not by the soil of Liberia . . . The cause is due to other factors. . ."—apparently a reference to the 1926 contracts.[45] M. Sottile declared that Liberia would consider any League proposal for financial assistance. On January 23 he wrote that Liberia would be grateful if the League, while respecting its sovereign rights, would offer its administrative assistance with a view to carrying out social and public health reforms. On the following day the League Council adopted a report which suggested that the Liberian government ratify the forced labor convention adopted by the International Labor Conference in June 1930—a suggestion which Liberia carried out by registering its ratification in May 1931.[46] The Council also appointed a committee, consisting of representatives of the British Empire, France, Germany, Italy, Liberia, Poland, Spain and Venezuela, to examine the question of administrative assistance in agreement with the Liberian government.[47] The Council asked the United States to participate in the work of this committee, and, accepting the invitation, the United States named its chargé in Monrovia, Samuel Reber, Jr., as its representative.

As a result of the meeting in London from February 27 to March 3, 1931 of the Council's Committee on Liberia, it was agreed to send a second committee to Liberia to study administrative, financial and public health questions. The committee consisted of Dr. Brunot, former French colonial governor, Mr. Ligthart, former director of the "Javasche Bank," and Dr. Mackenzie of the Health Section of the League Secretariat. The Council Committee also accepted the offer of the British government to transfer Doctor Howells from a neighboring colony to Liberia, as an emergency measure.[48]

42. It was agreed that the Council should advance the expenses of the representative, Dr. Mackenzie, subject to reimbursement by the Liberian government, if possible. President Barclay agreed to accept the representative, provided he were accompanied by a Liberian official, and Dr. Mackenzie proceeded to Liberia on a British gunboat. *Minutes*, C./67th Session/P.V.9[1], May 20, 21, 1932; also *New York Times*. July 2, 1932, and *Afro-American*, July 16, 1932.

43. Cf. "The Suppression of Slavery," *Geneva Special Studies*, April 1931, p. 21.

44. For excerpts from the notes, cf. *The Annual Message of President Barclay*, December 22, 1931, cited, p. 35.

45. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, February 1931, p. 192, 218, 470.

46. *Ibid.*, July 1931, p. 1421. In its communication of December 15, 1930, the Liberian government declared that it had "accepted" this convention, but it did not deposit its ratification until after the Council's report. Under this convention it will be required to submit an annual report. Cf. Article 408, Treaty of Versailles; Article 22, Convention on Forced Labor.

47. By virtue of its replacement of Venezuela on the Council, Panama took the place of Venezuela on this Committee, beginning with its sixth meeting on January 25, 1932.

48. Cf. League of Nations, "Preliminary report of the Committee of the Council," *Official Journal*, July 1931, p. 1448.

THE BRUNOT REPORT

On September 25, 1931, after visiting Liberia for six weeks, the Brunot committee completed its report, which was not published, however, until the following May. The report declared that it was urgently necessary to alleviate the financial and sanitary situation, and to restore the confidence of the natives in the government, and that these ends could be attained only by foreign aid. It was questionable, the experts subsequently declared, whether the reform measures of the Liberian government had had practical application.[49] The report outlined a reconstruction program, based on an accurate map, a census and a mining-agricultural survey, which should be undertaken by foreign experts. It asked the abolition of all compulsory labor except in the case of communal work on roads in tribal territory, and stated that the rights of the natives to the land and to the product of their labor should be guaranteed. Although an improved system of education was necessary, no new effort to tax the tribes for this purpose should be made until after the establishment of a general system of administration which would restore confidence among the natives. The committee recommended that the whole country be divided into three provinces.

To carry out a reconstruction program, the Brunot committee recommended the engagement of 20 foreigners—three financial advisers, a legal and a deputy legal adviser, military adviser, eight administrators and six medical officers, all of whom should be granted the necessary powers by the Liberian government. The financial advisers, who were to be granted greater authority than that enjoyed by the financial adviser under the 1926 contract, were to be nominated by the League in agreement with the United States, which would mean altering the terms of the 1926 loan contract.[50] The chief legal adviser was to become president of the Liberia circuit court, and the jury system was to be temporarily suspended. Apparently it was believed that, unless foreign control over the courts was established, capital could not be attracted to the country and the reconstruction program would be defeated. The eight administrators were not only to enforce the law, but were to have wide judicial power in native cases, including the right to impose summary penalties for minor offenses.[51] In the coastal areas, however, Liberian administrative officials were to continue to exercise authority. The Brunot report insisted that Liberia could recover only with the aid of a program "of *practical assistance* and not merely by *advice*."

In considering the desirability of revising the Firestone contracts, the Brunot committee expressed the view that while Liberia's future depended on the prosperity of the small native cultivator, the development of a prosperous industrial plantation was not incompatible with this end. The Firestone plantation was a great achievement "due to the large capital and the really remarkable energy and effort displayed." When the plantation became ready for tapping, the labor problem would become serious. The Firestone company could, however, attract the necessary workers by erecting model native villages, each having cultivated land and the conveniences needed for happy family life. Moreover, the rubber contract was "very favorable to the lessee." At the end of the next five years the Liberian government will probably receive from the rubber export tax and land rent, only $40,320, *"an amount which is not sufficient even to pay the officials responsible for the service of the loan* [*sic*]."[52] The Committee recommended the conclusion of new agreements between the Liberian government and Mr. Firestone, providing for a moratorium on the 1926 loan, and for the advance in installments by Mr. Firestone of the second half of the 1926 loan, amounting to $2,500,000, to finance the reconstruction program. Subsequently it suggested that the size of the Firestone rubber concession be reduced, and the obligation of the Liberian government to assist in labor recruiting abolished.[53]

LIBERIA'S COUNTER-PROPOSAL

At the meeting of the League Liberia Committee in January 1932, the Liberian government stated that since the Brunot report had arrived in Monrovia only in November, it had not had time to examine it carefully; it consequently asked that discussion be postponed. While agreeing that no decision should be taken until the following April, the Liberia committee proceeded nevertheless to a preliminary examination of the Brunot report. After criticizing the report on the ground of alleged inaccuracies and stating that the committee had exceeded

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49. Cf. remarks of M. Brunot, *Minutes of the 12th Meeting*, February 1, 1932. The opposition party, represented in Geneva by an aboriginal native, M. Morais, denied that the reforms were effective. Cf. Henri A. Junod, *La Supplique du Liberia*, Bureau International pour la Defense des Indigènes, October 1931, *Journal de Genève*, October 3, 7, 1931; cf. also the letter from fifteen chiefs, complaining of forced labor exactions and requisitions, *Afro-American*, July 16, 1932.

50. Cf. M. Ligthart's remarks, *Minutes of the 10th Meeting*, Committee of the Council; also *Report by the Experts on Liberian Government's Request for Assistance*, cited.

51. The system recommended by the committee is similar to that of the French *indigénat*, and is open to the same criticism. Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, cited, Vol. I, p. 1016.

52. C./Liberia/4, p. 28.

53. League of Nations, *Draft Plan of Assistance*, C./Liberia/16, May 14, 1932.

its terms of reference, the Liberian representatives, Secretary of State Grimes and M. Sottile, declared that it was unconstitutional to concentrate judicial and executive authority in the same person, as the Brunot report recommended.[54] Moreover, in a memorandum written in August 1931 but not published until the following May,[55] the Liberian government declared that it could not "accept any assistance, plan or suggestion relating to matters other than social, health or finance reform," or involving political or judicial organization. It added that no staff should be offered to the Liberian government which is composed of nationals from countries neighbors of Liberia, and that the members of the two investigating commissions should also be excluded.

In its formal reply to the Brunot report on April 27, 1932, the Liberian government, after reiterating that reforms had been made, declared that there were a sufficient number of reputable citizens available to serve as administrators. While Liberia was willing to employ a few foreign assistants, "it was never contemplated by the Government that proposals would be made to substitute the native organization wholly by foreigners, nor to withdraw its native population from under direct administration of Liberians and place them entirely under the direction of an alien race. . . To carry out the suggestion of the Brunot Commission . . . would not only rob qualified citizens of a natural right to effectively participate in the Government of the Provinces, but would destroy the fealty which the population now displays toward the Government of the Republic; and would also work against the ideal of a homogeneous people." The Liberian government offered, however, to appoint for five years three provincial commissioners recommended by the League. While they would be responsible to the Secretary of the Interior, copies of their reports would be furnished to the League. The government proposed that the five financial officials under the 1926 contract remain, unless the number could be reduced by agreement, and that a director of health and sanitation be appointed—making a total of nine foreign officials instead of twenty as in the Brunot report. The government declared that it could not accept recommendations concerning the courts, since the judicial system was a "matter of purely internal policy."[56] Moreover it now opposed a new loan, which would mean the "financial ruin" of the Republic.

PLAN OF THE LEAGUE COMMITTEE

In considering the Brunot report and Liberia's counter-proposal, the League committee was confronted with three main questions: the number and status of foreign officials sent to Liberia; the question of a new loan; and modification of the Firestone contracts. The committee made it clear from the outset that the League would not attempt to enforce any recommendations on Liberia but that, on the other hand, if Liberia desired assistance, the League must obtain satisfactory assurances that such assistance would be effective. As Lord Cecil, chairman of the Council committee, declared, the League would be "in a quite impossible position unless it could be certain that its advice would be followed."[57] Moreover, the scope of any reconstruction plan would depend on whether Liberia contracted a new loan. Theoretically, it was possible for the League to guarantee a loan similar to those guaranteed to Austria and Hungary. Actually, however, this plan was not considered,[58] apparently because of the unsatisfactory state of the world bond market, and the belief that reconstruction loans had proved a delusion in the past. Although the Brunot committee recommended that the Firestone interests issue the second half of the 1926 loan, members of the Council committee pointed out that this might strengthen the hold of the company.[59] During the discussion M. Ligthart, the Dutch expert, frankly declared that it was "unfortunate" that the Liberian government had granted the Firestone concessions. Since Liberia had a scanty population, "all the labour employed by the plantation represented a dead loss to native growers who had need of it. Obviously it would be better, for the normal development of Liberia, for the Firestone Company to leave the country, but that was impossible as the contract with that company had been concluded for a period of 99 years."[60] Liberia could "do nothing without the Firestone Company." M. Madariaga, the representative of Spain, declared that "the ideal solution" would be for the League to say that the present situation concerning the Firestone company was "a bad one and should be radically changed,"

54. League of Nations, *Minutes of the 6th to 10th Sessions*, January 1932.

55. League of Nations, Letter of August 8, 1931, communicated to the Council May 19, 1932, C.476.1932.VII.,C./Liberia/3[1].

56. League of Nations, *Memorandum of the Government of Liberia on the Report of the Experts*, C./Liberia/13., April 29, 1932.

57. League of Nations, *Minutes of the 10th Meeting*, Council Committee, January 29, 1932.

58. Cf. remarks of Lord Cecil, *Minutes of the 8th Meeting*, January 27, 1932.

59. Cf. *ibid.*, *Minutes of the 10th Meeting*, January 29, 1932, C./Liberia/P.V.10.

60. League of Nations, *Minutes of the 8th Meeting*, Committee of the Council, January 25, 1932, C./Liberia/P.V.6[1].

but that was not practicable. What should be done was "to try by negotiations to get the Firestone Company to adapt itself to the labour and social conditions of the country. . . What was the good of borrowing money for Liberia, if the League found itself forced in its turn to dissimulate the fact that the existence in such a country of the Firestone Company's plantations was pernicious to the population?"[61] In the committee's second report to the Council,[62] it was stated that "in the opinion of certain members of the Committee the coexistence in Liberia of a weak State and a powerful foreign undertaking gives rise to disadvantages . . ." These members consider it to be "indispensable that the rate of development of the plantations should be adapted to the economic and social conditions of Liberia," and that the financial burden of the loan should be reduced. Other members "felt that it would be better to suspend judgment on this or any other question until the next session . . ." The Committee understood, moreover, that "the Firestone Company is prepared to give the utmost consideration to the general interests of Liberia, and that, as regards its policy in general as affecting the welfare of the aboriginal population, the company would be willing to be guided by the best opinion."

Proposed revision of Firestone contracts

In its report of May 1932 the Council committee declared that it could not recommend a new loan to a country "already so encumbered" as Liberia. It believed, however, that a moderate program of reforms could be carried from the present current resources of the government, plus the unexpended balance of the 1926 loan, amounting to $247,000, and a moratorium. It recommended that until the annual revenues of Liberia reached $650,000 a moratorium should be granted the government on the service of the 1926 loan, and that after expiration of the moratorium there should be a reduction in interest charges. It also recommended that the size of the Firestone concession be reduced and the rental increased from 6 to about 50 cents an acre. It asked that negotiations should take place between the Liberian government, assisted by League experts, and the Firestone interests. From the point of view of administrative reconstruction, the committee recommended that Liberia be divided into three provinces, each administered by a Provincial and Deputy Commissioner who would be responsible to the Liberian president through the Secretary of the Interior. The Monrovia government should agree to appoint these six commissioners nominated by the League of Nations. These commissioners "may be replaced for adequate reasons with the consent of the League of Nations." The Liberia government should engage also two medical officers upon the same terms as the other experts and should continue to appoint the five financial officials under the 1926 loan contract. Thus the League plan calls for thirteen foreigners to serve as Liberian officials, in contrast to the twenty proposed by the Brunot report and the nine proposed by Liberia.[63]

The Provincial Commissioner is charged with the duty of enforcing the laws and maintaining peace and order. It is not clear whether the powers of the Financial Adviser are to be restricted by the terms of the 1926 loan contract, or whether they are to be more extensive. The League project merely states that the Financial Adviser shall have all the powers necessary to insure the efficient functioning of Liberia's fiscal services, and the right of supervision over all financial questions—particularly to make sure that the credits allocated are being judicially applied for the purposes stipulated.

Appointment of a Chief Adviser

During the committee's discussion the necessity was pointed out of having a unified control so that the work of the different foreign officials might not be dissipated. In order to achieve this end and to maintain the authority of the League, the committee's plan calls for the appointment by the League, with the acceptance of the President of Liberia, of a Chief Adviser.[64] "This Adviser shall be responsible to and removable by the League, and shall be attached to the Central Government in order to give it the benefit of his advice, to co-ordinate the work of the foreign experts, and to supervise the execution of the scheme of assistance. For this purpose, the Liberian Government shall grant him all facilities for the performance of his duties throughout his term of office. The Chief Adviser may, in particular, ask for any documents and official reports he may require, and may make such investiga-

61. League of Nations, *Minutes of the 11th Meeting,* January 30, 1932; cf. also M. Madariaga's remarks in the Council, *Official Journal,* March 1932, p. 527.

62. League of Nations, *Official Journal,* March 1932, p. 523.

63. Professor Henri Labouret declares that "France, a neighbor of Liberia who suffers more than all the neighboring colonies from the trouble and insecurity ruling in the internal provinces of the Black Republic," and which is the second colonial power in the world, should be represented among the foreign officials. (*L'Afrique Française,* June 1932, p. 328.) Liberia, however, has indicated an unwillingness to accept either British or French advisers. Cf. p. 130.

64. The Chief Adviser is to receive a salary of $12,000, presumably paid by the League, in comparison with $12,500 paid to the American Financial Adviser; the Provincial Commissioners are to receive $8,000, and the Assistant Commissioners, $6,000, paid by the Liberian government.

tions as he may think fit in the country." Any disagreement between the Liberian government and the Financial Adviser shall be arbitrated by the Chief Adviser. Moreover, "should the Chief Adviser find that there has been negligence in the application of the scheme he shall so inform the Government and shall advise what steps shall be taken; should his advice have no effect he shall make recommendations to the Government in writing, and should his written recommendations not be followed he may submit the question to the Council of the League of Nations."

If the Liberian government refuses to carry out the Council's recommendations, the Council may declare that the agreement has lapsed and that consequently the modifications introduced into the loan contract with the American Finance Corporation are no longer binding on that company. In all such cases the Council shall decide by a unanimous vote, Liberia's vote not counting in reckoning unanimity. In urgent cases the President of the Council may act on behalf of the Council, provided that he refers the matter to the Council as soon as possible. The plan should come to an end after a period of five years, unless the Liberian government intimates its desire that it continue. Before the expiration of that period, the League may discontinue its cooperation if it thinks fit. At its session of May 1932 the League Council adopted a report asking that if the Liberian government accepted the principle of the committee's plan, negotiations concerning its adoption should take place in August between the Monrovia government and the Council Committee, assisted by the Financial and Health Organizations of the League. The final result should be confirmed at the September session of the Council.[65]

CRITICISM OF THE LEAGUE PROPOSAL

In a communication released in Geneva on May 18, 1932 the United States declared that in its opinion "conditions in Liberia have now grown so chaotic, and adequate authority has become so demoralized that it is doubtful whether an effective government exists in the country." The assistance of Liberia was "rightly a matter of international concern which should be solved through sustained international cooperation. The American Government would be deeply disappointed if there were a suspension of the present negotiations" and it accordingly suggested that a subcommittee be appointed, on which it would be glad to be represented, to remain in session until a plan had been worked out. "In the event, however, that the Liberian problem is left from now until next autumn without solution and without a continuing means of international cooperation to deal with it, the American Government would find it necessary to reserve its position and its full liberty of action."[66]

American reservation

Moreover, in a reservation to the report of the Liberia Committee adopted by the Council on May 20, the United States expressed the belief that

> ". . . the delegation of adequate authority by Liberia to a single official of an international agency would be the most genuinely practical solution of the problem. This would leave the details of a program of complete rehabilitation to be put into effect step by step and on a self-supporting basis and would take advantage of all existing machinery. . . The American Government would, however, be prepared to study a proposal involving more initial changes in Liberian organization and consequently much greater initial expense provided it were clearly understood that there would be the requisite delegation of authority by Liberia as an indispensable preliminary to any adjustment of the present financial situation. In the light of the above the American Government would not be willing to recommend to the Finance Corporation, which is the interested party, any financial negotiations until a satisfactory administrative plan has been agreed to by Liberia. The foregoing constitutes a full reservation of the position of the American Government on the points mentioned. It is based upon many years of experience in endeavoring to induce the governing elements in Liberia to improve the conditions of the country through 'advisers' and upon the conviction that no plan can succeed unless it is founded upon principles which will insure its practicability."[67]

It is not known therefore whether the United States will veto the present League proposal.

At the other extreme, the League plan is criticized on the ground that it does not impose adequate responsibility on Liberians. It is argued that if foreigners go to Liberia to administer rather than advise, the same error that the United States is alleged to have committed in Haiti and Nicaragua may occur—namely, that of doing things for Liberia rather than teaching Liberians to do things for themselves. In reply to the American criticism of the adviser system, it is asserted that the system applied in Liberia in the past was irresponsible, and that few first-class advisers were sent.[68] The development of Liberia, it is argued, can best be advanced by winning the confidence and good-will of the Liberians, rather than by pressing the Monrovia government to accept

65. According to Secretary of the Treasury Gabriel Dennis, the Liberian legislature was considering the League proposal in July 1932. *Afro-American*, July 16, 1932.

66. League of Nations, C./Liberia/20, May 18, 1932.

67. U. S. State Department, *Press Releases*, May 21, 1932, p. 515.

68. For a criticism of one American Financial Adviser, cf. p. 123. Cf. also remarks of Viscount Cecil, March 16, 1932. *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, Vol. 83, p. 929; Secretary of State Grimes, *Minutes of the 10th Meeting*, Committee of the Council, January 29, 1932; and Secretary of the Treasury Gabriel Dennis, *Afro-American*, July 2, 1932.

foreign officials with power to impose decisions. In reply to this criticism, defenders of the League plan assert that during a transitional state the officials recommended by the Council must have real power, otherwise a condition of chaos will continue. As the plan develops, more and more authority will be delegated to Liberian administrators. It is pointed out that, since the World War, Germany, Austria and Hungary have delegated extensive powers to foreign officials for reconstruction purposes.

The League plan is also criticized on the ground that, following the proposal of the Liberian government, it would allow the United States to continue to nominate five financial officials, leaving the other six to be nominated by the League. It is argued that five financial officials is an unnecessarily large number, and that the division of responsibility between the League and the United States may lead to conflict. In reply, it is stated that so long as the League Adviser may arbitrate disputes between the Financial Adviser and the Liberian government, and so long as the United States continues to be represented on the League's Liberia Committee, the likelihood of conflict is reduced.

THE POSSIBILITY OF INTERVENTION

Should the Liberia government and the League fail to reach an agreement in August, such alternatives as revolution and intervention remain. Dr. Brunot, the French expert, declares that Liberian natives informed him that they "would not hesitate to revolt against the Libero-Americans" in case assistance from the League was not forthcoming.[69] Deprived of funds with which to purchase munitions, the Monrovia government might be overthrown, especially if native tribes were able to run into the country arms from the neighboring French and British colonies. Should the hinterland "natives" overturn the Monrovia government, they might consent to the establishment of a League mandate or to a division of Liberia between France and England.

Under international law intervention for humanitarian purposes, epecially if it is joint rather than unilateral, is supported by many authorities.[70] That the League has any power to intervene in the internal affairs of Liberia has been denied, however, by the representatives of Liberia, Panama, Venezuela and Great Britain. Moreover, M. Zaleski of Poland, the Council *rapporteur* on Liberia, has declared that the League "had never had any idea of infringing upon the independence of a State Member of the League."[71] According to some students, this view of the League's competence is too restricted. The League cannot expect, it is argued, to prevent a great power from resorting to self-help, as in the case of Japan against China, unless it is willing to organize intervention in a state which demonstrates incapacity for fulfilling its obligations which, in the case of Liberia, include those defined by the Anti-Slavery Convention of 1926, the Forced Labor Convention of 1930 and Article 23 of the League Covenant providing for "just treatment of the native inhabitants of territories" under the control of a member state.

Assuming the correctness of the view that the League could not itself organize an intervention in Liberia, does it follow that a single power may undertake such an intervention? Will France and Great Britain long remain indifferent to the alleged existence of yellow fever in Liberia and the disaffection of its native tribes? Will the United States, in view of its historic relationship to Liberia and the Firestone investments, intervene if the League negotiations fail? Although the State Department has declared that it does not wish to assume any exclusive African responsibilities, its note of May 18 reserving full freedom of action is interpreted in some quarters as a threat of intervention.[72] Finally, would the League of Nations consent to unilateral intervention in Liberia, whose political independence is guaranteed by the League, any more than it has consented to the recent intervention of Japan in China? Even though the League does not itself organize an intervention, may it legally authorize a single power to undertake such intervention on behalf of humanitarian or international principles? May a state be expelled from the League, and thereby deprived of the protection of Article 10 of the Covenant? According to the last paragraph of Article 16: "Any member of the League which has violated any covenant of the League may be declared to be no longer a Member of the League. . ." Does this mean that the League may expel Liberia for not fulfilling its general treaty obligations, or maintaining a certain minimum standard of order and justice? These questions will remain academic if the League and Liberia reach an agreement upon a reconstruction program.

69. League of Nations, *Minutes of the 7th Meeting*, Committee of the Council, January 26, 1932. Cf. also *La Supplique du Liberia*, cited.

70. For a summary, cf. P. Fauchille, *Traité de Droit International Public*, 8th ed. (Paris), Vol. I, Part I, p. 558 *et seq.*

71. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, July 1931, p. 1119, 1122; *ibid.*, March 1932, p. 527. For other non-intervention statements, cf. *Minutes of the 11th and 12th Meetings*, Committee of the Council, January 29 and February 1, 1932; for Viscount Cecil's view that the League has no power of intervention, cf. *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, March 16, 1932, p. 930; also C./67th Session/P.V.6[1].

72. Cf. editorial, "An Appeal to Liberia," *The Nation*, July 27, 1932.

CONCLUSION

Although admitting that Liberians are largely responsible for the present plight of their country and that the government is in drastic need of foreign assistance, a number of observers fear that the world may be too harsh in its judgments. To a certain extent, the present condition of Liberia is due to the attitude of foreign powers which have been unsympathetic to the idea of an independent Negro republic. Moreover, the United States, while protecting Liberia from aggression, has done little to assist the country in its internal development. Following the publication of the Christy report, one writer declared:

> "Despite the presence of American officials appointed by the State Department under the 1912 and 1926 loan agreements, despite the presence of American diplomatic officers and the Firestone managers, slavery and forced labor have flourished throughout the country. The report of the International Commission states that some of the worst abuses have been committed by the Frontier Force—a body supposedly under American control. The present state of affairs in Liberia is thus a reflection upon the Liberian policy of the United States."[73]

The situation was not due to personal incompetence so much as to a general policy of shielding Liberia from the world without securing adequate guarantees that Liberia would not abuse its independence.[74] A number of Liberians believe that the United States took unfair advantage of its special position to induce President King to accept the 1926 concessions which League of Nations experts have since pronounced onerous.

Secondly, it is declared that the world is in danger of applying to Liberia standards which it does not itself observe. Few criticisms seem to have been made of the fact that white men in the French Congo and in Spanish Fernando Po profited as much from the export of labor as did Liberian officials. Moreover, atrocities have frequently occurred in territory under European and American rule, but in no case have such atrocities been followed by the establishment of international control.[75] Moreover, while professing to be shocked at the existence of forced labor in Liberia, humanitarian opinion has not been strong enough to induce many governments holding colonies to ratify the draft convention on forced labor adopted by the International Labour Office on June 28, 1930. Although the powers represented on the League Council apparently induced Liberia to ratify this convention, the only other states which appear to have ratified this agreement are Great Britain, Australia, the Irish Free State, Sweden and Denmark.[76] Of this group, Great Britain is the only large colonial power. Should the League attempt to bring pressure upon Liberia to prohibit forced labor when the leading members of the League fail to undertake such obligations? While not attempting to defend such a discrimination, some observers assert nevertheless that if Liberia adopts high standards of native administration with the assistance of the League, the great colonial powers will irresistably be forced to adopt these standards.

Finally, it is alleged that the world tends to exaggerate conditions in Liberia. The charges made last March that many innocent Krus had been "massacred" by way of reprisal are cited as an example. Investigation showed that while the condition on the Kru coast was serious, its causes were radically different from those which had been represented.[77]

Some Liberians declare that foreign apprehension over yellow fever has been stimulated partly for political reasons and that health conditions in the country are much better than represented by outside investigators. Finally, to show that the African native tribes are not as antagonistic to Liberian authority as foreigners have represented, the Liberians cite the statement of a Liberian district commissioner on June 10, 1932, declaring that as a result of a riot in the British colony of Sierra Leone 200 natives crossed the Liberian border for refuge, many of them in a pitiable condition. They charged oppressive treatment on the part of certain chiefs and improper conduct by a British district commissioner.

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73. R. L. Buell, "The Liberian Paradox," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, April 1931.

74. Many Liberians were irritated by the fact that the Firestone company employed former President King as counsel in the Davidson case. This was a suit brought by a former Firestone employee against the company. Liberians charge that the Firestone interests attempted to prevent the case from coming before the Liberian courts. The Firestone interests declare, however, that the court exhibited gross partiality in hearing this case. The Davidson suit is pending before the Supreme Court.

75. Cf. the incidents of the Congo Free State and the French Congo, the Cocoa Islands, Putumayo—all before the World War; the American *caco* war in Haiti in 1918; the "massacre" of Amritsar in India in 1919; the French bombardment of Damascus in 1925; and the Ross report on labor in Portuguese Africa in 1925. M. Madariaga of Spain declared at a meeting of the League Council that the Christy report "had obviously been prepared by men of undoubted honesty and good will, but it showed a lack of perspective, and, for that reason, was to some extent wanting in objectivity." League of Nations, *Official Journal*, March 1932, p. 526.

76. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, April 1931, p. 674; June 1931, p. 942; August 1931, p. 1545; February 1932, p. 282.

77. Cf. Ben M. Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," *Journal of Negro History*, January 1932; also N. H. B. Cassell, "Liberia Defended by a Liberian," *Current History*, September 1931.